

Amendments to the Claims:

Following is a complete listing of the claims pending in the application, as amended, which replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method, ~~for a computer system of an item ordering service to present actual delivery date information to a customer for each of multiple fulfillment plan options available for use in fulfilling an order, the method comprising:~~

~~under control of the computer system of the item ordering service, and before receiving a request from a customer of the an item ordering service a request to obtain information about to initiate an ordering process for one or more items,~~

automatically determining multiple geographically distributed item distribution centers that are maintained by the item ordering service and that are each available as an alternative to supply the items to the customer if an order is received from the customer for the items, each of the determined item distribution centers having distinct current inventory that includes the items, the automatic determining of the multiple geographically distributed item distribution centers being performed by one or more programmed computer systems of the item ordering service;

automatically determining multiple distinct alternative fulfillment plans for supplying the items to the customer that are each associated with one of the determined item distribution centers such that each of the determined item distribution centers has at least one associated fulfillment plan, each fulfillment plan indicating that the items are to be shipped from the item distribution center associated with the fulfillment plan and indicating a manner of shipping the items from the associated item distribution center to the customer and indicating information about processing that would take place at the associated item distribution center as part of the fulfillment plan to prepare the items for the shipping to the customer, the automatic determining of the multiple distinct alternative fulfillment plans being performed by the one or more programmed computer systems of the item ordering service;

for each of multiple of the determined distinct fulfillment plans, —determining a cost of use for that fulfillment plan if the items are supplied using that fulfillment plan; and —determining an actual delivery date for that fulfillment plan on which the customer will

receive the items if the items are supplied using that fulfillment plan, the determined actual delivery date being based at least in part on the indicated manner of shipping the items for that fulfillment plan and being based at least in part on the indicated information about the processing that would take place at the associated item distribution center for that fulfillment plan, the determining of the cost of use and the determining of the actual delivery date being performed by the one or more programmed computer systems of the item ordering service; and

providing to the customer an indication of each of multiple of the determined fulfillment plans as options for supplying the items to the customer, each indication of a determined fulfillment plan option including the determined cost of use and the determined actual delivery date for that determined fulfillment plan option; and

~~under the control of the computer system of the item ordering service, and after an indication from the customer to use a selected one of the indicated determined fulfillment plan options as part of an order for the items, initiating fulfillment of the order for the items using the selected fulfillment plan,~~

so that the customer will receive options for how an order is to be fulfilled and will receive accurate delivery date information for the order prior to order placement.

2-6. (Canceled)

7. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the item ordering service is a Web-based service, and wherein the providing of the indications of the determined fulfillment plan options includes displaying the indications of the determined fulfillment plan options to the customer via a transmitted Web page.

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the provided indication for each of at least some of the determined fulfillment plans describes how that fulfillment plan will be performed.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1 including, before the providing of the indications, selecting one of the determined fulfillment plans as a default for use in fulfilling the

order, the selecting based at least in part on the determined actual delivery date for that fulfillment plan, and wherein an indication of the selected fulfillment plan that is provided to the customer indicates that the selected fulfillment plan is the default.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9 including receiving an indication of preferred ordering instructions for the customer, and wherein the selecting of the one fulfillment plan as a default is based on the preferred ordering instructions.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1 including receiving an indication of preferred ordering instructions for the customer, and wherein the determining of the fulfillment plans is performed in such a manner that each of the determined fulfillment plans is consistent with the preferred ordering instructions.

12. (Canceled)

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the determining of the actual delivery date for a fulfillment plan includes:

for each of the one or more indicated items, determining a date at which the item will be received by the customer based at least in part on a determined time at which the item will be ready to be shipped from the associated item distribution center for the fulfillment plan and on an amount of time for shipping the item to the customer from the associated item distribution center for the fulfillment plan; and

selecting a last of the determined dates as the actual delivery date for the fulfillment plan.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the providing to the customer of the indications of the multiple determined fulfillment plans is performed in response to an automated determination of a potential order for those items from the customer, and wherein the determining of the cost of use for a fulfillment plan includes:

modeling at least some future costs of supplying expected future orders to recipients if the indicated items are supplied to the customer using the fulfillment plan, the expected future

orders being from multiple customers for multiple items and being distinct from the potential order for the items by the customer;

determining at least some of multiple costs that are directly attributable to using the fulfillment plan to supply the items to the customer;

assigning costs to at least some of one or more reductions in customer goodwill that result from using the fulfillment plan to supply the items to the customer; and

totaling the modeled future costs, the determined directly attributable costs, and the assigned customer goodwill reduction costs.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein at least some of the determined fulfillment plans additionally indicate one or more processing lanes to be used at each of the indicated item distribution centers, and wherein, for each of the at least some determined fulfillment plans, the determining of the actual delivery date for that fulfillment plan is based at least in part on the one or more processing lanes indicated to be used for that fulfillment plan.

16. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for providing to a customer information about actual fulfillment of an order before completion of an ordering process for the order, the method comprising:

receiving from a customer of a merchant an indication of one or more items without receiving a request to initiate an ordering process to order the one or more items; and

~~under control of a computer system of the merchant, and upon after receiving the indication from the customer and before receiving the request to initiate the ordering process to order the items,~~

automatically determining multiple fulfillment plans that are options for fulfilling an order for the items, each fulfillment plan indicating one or more distribution centers from which the items of the order are to be transported to a recipient, the one or more distribution centers for each fulfillment plan being a selected subset of multiple alternative distribution centers of the merchant that each are available to supply at least one of the indicated items.~~the~~

automatic determining of the multiple fulfillment plans being performed by one or more programmed computer systems of the merchant;

for each of at least some of the determined fulfillment plans, automatically determining a time of actual delivery of the items if that fulfillment plan is used to fulfill the order and determining a cost for fulfilling the order if that fulfillment plan is used to fulfill the order, the determining of actual delivery time based at least in part on information determined about processing that would take place at the distribution centers indicated by the fulfillment plan and on information about transporting of the items from those indicated distribution centers to the recipient, the processing that would take place at those indicated distribution centers for that fulfillment plan including preparing the items for the transporting of the items from those indicated distribution centers, the automatic determining of the time of actual delivery and of the cost for fulfilling the order being performed by the one or more programmed computer systems of the merchant;

automatically selecting one of the at least some determined fulfillment plans to be used for fulfilling the order based at least in part on the determined actual delivery time for the selected fulfillment plan and based at least in part on the determined cost for the selected fulfillment plan, the automatic selecting of the one fulfillment plan being performed by the one or more programmed computer systems of the merchant; and

providing information to the customer about ordering the items that includes the determined actual delivery time for the selected fulfillment plan, so as to enable the customer to order the item from the merchant using the selected fulfillment plan.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein the received indication of the items represents a potential order for those items.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein the providing to the customer of the information includes providing information to enable the customer to initiate the ordering process for the potential order in such a manner as to use the selected fulfillment plan for fulfilling the potential order.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the information is provided as part of a Web page transmitted to the customer, and wherein the provided information to enable the customer to initiate the ordering process so as to use the selected fulfillment plan includes a displayed control that is selectable by the customer to perform the initiating of the ordering process.

20-31. (Canceled)

32. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein actual delivery times are determined for at least one fulfillment plan other than the selected fulfillment plan, and including providing information to the customer about ordering the items that includes the determined actual delivery times for at least one of the other fulfillment plans.

33. (Original) The method of claim 32 wherein the providing to the customer of the determined actual delivery times for the other fulfillment plans includes providing information to enable the customer to indicate to use one of the other fulfillment plans for fulfilling the order.

34. (Original) The method of claim 33 wherein the provided determined actual delivery times for the other fulfillment plans are part of a Web page transmitted to the customer, and wherein the provided information to enable the customer to indicate to use one of the other fulfillment plans for fulfilling the order includes one or more displayed controls that are selectable by the customer to perform the indicating of the other fulfillment plan.

35. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein the provided information to the customer about ordering the items includes an indication of the determined cost associated with the selected fulfillment plan.

36. (Original) The method of claim 35 including providing information to the customer about ordering the items that includes the determined actual delivery time and the

determined associated cost for at least one fulfillment plan other than the selected fulfillment plan.

37. (Original) The method of claim 35 wherein the associated cost for a fulfillment plan reflects a cost that will be charged to a customer for using the fulfillment plan.

38. (Original) The method of claim 35 wherein the associated cost for a fulfillment plan reflects a cost that will be incurred by a supplier of the items for using the fulfillment plan.

39. (Original) The method of claim 35 wherein the associated cost for a fulfillment plan includes costs that are directly attributable to using the fulfillment plan to supply the items to the recipient.

40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35 wherein the received indication of the items represents a potential order for those items, and wherein the associated cost for a fulfillment plan includes modeled future costs of supplying expected future orders to recipients if the items are supplied to the recipient using the fulfillment plan, the expected future orders being distinct from the potential order.

41. (Original) The method of claim 35 wherein the associated cost for a fulfillment plan includes costs assigned to reductions in customer goodwill that result from using the fulfillment plan to supply the items to the recipient.

42. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein the provided information to the customer about ordering the items includes one or more displayed controls that are selectable by the customer to specify options related to using the selected fulfillment plan to fulfill the order.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein the determined information about the processing that would take place at the distribution centers indicated by the selected fulfillment plan includes an indication of one or more processing lanes to be used at

each of the distribution centers indicated for the selected fulfillment plan, such that the determining of the actual delivery time for the selected fulfillment plan is further based in part on the indicated one or more processing lanes.

44. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein the determining of the actual delivery time for the selected fulfillment plan is further based on information about a manner of acquiring by the distribution centers indicated by the selected fulfillment plan of at least some of the items.

45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein the determining of the actual delivery time for the selected fulfillment plan is further based on an indication of a priority for fulfilling the order.

46. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein the provided information for the selected fulfillment plan includes an indication of a manner of processing at least some of the items at the distribution centers indicated for the selected fulfillment plan.

47. (Original) The method of claim 16 including receiving an indication of ordering instructions for the customer, and wherein the determining of the fulfillment plan options and/or the selecting of the one fulfillment plan are based on the ordering instructions.

48. (Original) The method of claim 47 wherein the ordering instructions correspond to a predefined default ordering option for the customer.

49. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein the recipient is the customer.

50. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein the transporting of the items is by shipping the items, and wherein the actual delivery time is a future date.

51. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein the transporting of the items includes a physical moving of the items.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein the multiple alternative distribution centers each have local inventory of items that are available to be transported to recipients and that include at least one of the indicated items.

53. (Original) The method of claim 16 including indicating to order the items using the selected fulfillment plan.

54. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium whose contents include software instructions that when executed configure a computing device to provide to a customer information about actual fulfillment of an order before completion of an ordering process for the order, by performing a method comprising:

receiving from a customer an indication of one or more items; and

after receiving the indication and before an ordering process for the one or more items is initiated by the customer,

for each of at least one or more fulfillment plans that are options for fulfilling an order for the items and that each indicate one or more distribution centers from which the items of the order are to be transported to a recipient, the one or more distribution centers for each fulfillment plan being selected from multiple alternative distribution centers of a merchant that each are available to supply items to recipients, automatically determining an actual delivery date of the items if that fulfillment plan is used to fulfill the order and determining a cost for using that fulfillment plan to fulfill the order, the determining of the actual delivery date based at least in part on information about processing that would take place at the distribution centers indicated by the fulfillment plan and on information about transporting of the items from those indicated distribution centers to the recipient;

selecting one of the at least one fulfillment plans to be used for fulfilling the order based at least in part on the determined cost for that one fulfillment plan; and

providing information to the customer about ordering the items that includes the determined actual delivery date for the selected fulfillment plan.

55. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 54 wherein actual delivery dates are determined for at least one fulfillment plan other than the selected fulfillment plan, and wherein the method further comprises providing to the customer information about the determined actual delivery dates for at least one of the other fulfillment plans in such a manner as to allow the customer to select one of the other fulfillment plans to be used for fulfilling the order.

56. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 54 wherein the computer-readable medium is a memory of a computing device.

57. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 54 wherein the computer-readable medium is a data transmission medium transmitting a generated data signal containing the contents.

58. (Canceled)

59. (Previously Presented) A computing device for providing to a customer information about actual fulfillment of an order at a time of placing the order, comprising:
one or more processors;
a plan determiner component that is configured to, when executed by at least one of the one or more processors, determine one or more fulfillment plans that are options for fulfilling an order received by a merchant for one or more indicated items, each fulfillment plan indicating one or more distribution centers from which the items of the order are to be transported to a recipient, the one or more distribution centers for each fulfillment plan being selected from multiple alternative distribution centers of the merchant that each are available to supply items to recipients;

an actual delivery time determiner component that is configured to, when executed by at least one of the one or more processors, and for each of at least some of the determined fulfillment options, determine a time of actual delivery of the items if that fulfillment plan is used to fulfill the order, the determining of the actual delivery time being based at least in part on information about processing that would take place at the distribution centers indicated by the fulfillment plan to prepare the items for transporting to the recipient; and

an information provider component that is configured to, when executed by at least one of the one or more processors, provide information to the customer about ordering the items that includes the determined actual delivery time for one of the at least some determined fulfillment plans that is selected to be used for fulfilling the order.

60. (Previously Presented) The computing device of claim 59 wherein the plan determiner component, the actual delivery time determiner component, and the information provider component each include software instructions for execution using one or more memories of the computing device.

61. (Previously Presented) The computing device of claim 59 wherein the actual delivery time determiner component determines a time of actual delivery of the items if a fulfillment plan is used to fulfill the order based at least in part on information about a manner of transporting the items to the recipient from the distribution centers indicated by the fulfillment plan.

62. (Previously Presented) The computing device of claim 59, wherein the plan determiner component consists of means for determining one or more fulfillment plans that are options for fulfilling an order received by a merchant for one or more indicated items, each fulfillment plan indicating one or more distribution centers from which the items of the order are to be transported to a recipient, the one or more distribution centers for each fulfillment plan being selected from multiple alternative distribution centers of the merchant that each are available to supply items to recipients; wherein the actual delivery time determiner component consists of means for, for each of at least some of the determined fulfillment options,

determining a time of actual delivery of the items if that fulfillment plan is used to fulfill the order, the determining of the actual delivery time being based at least in part on information about processing that would take place at the distribution centers indicated by the fulfillment plan to prepare the items for transporting to the recipient; and wherein the information provider component consists of means for providing information to the customer about ordering the items that includes the determined actual delivery time for one of the at least some determined fulfillment plans that is selected to be used for fulfilling the order.

63. (Previously Presented) A computer-implemented method for presenting information to a user about actual fulfillment of an order that will result from using each of multiple options for fulfilling the order, the method comprising:

receiving an indication of an order;

under control of a computer system of a merchant, and for each of multiple alternative distribution centers of the merchant, determining at least one option for fulfilling the order from that distribution center that includes a manner of shipping the order to a recipient;

under the control of the computer system of the merchant, and for each of multiple of the determined options, determining an actual provision date on which the order will be provided to the recipient if that determined option is used for fulfilling the order and determining a cost for fulfilling the order if that determined option is used to fulfill the order, the determining of the actual provision date being based at least in part on processing that would take place at the distribution center for the option to prepare the order to be packaged and shipped; and

presenting information to the user for each of multiple of the determined options, the information presented for each determined option including the determined actual provision date for that determined option,

so that the user can select one of the determined options to be used to fulfill the order based at least in part on the actual provision date for the selected option.

64. (Original) The method of claim 63 wherein the order is a potential order that is indicated before an instruction has been received to place the order.

65. (Original) The method of claim 63 wherein the presenting of the information to the user includes generating one or more Web pages for display to the user.

66. (Original) The method of claim 63 wherein the presenting of the information to the user includes presenting one or more controls selectable by the user to indicate one of the determined options.

67. (Original) The method of claim 63 including receiving an indication from the user of one of the determined options and using the indicated option to fulfill the order.

68. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 63 including, before the presenting of the information, and under the control of the computer system of the merchant, selecting one of the determined options as a preferred option for fulfilling the order based at least in part on the determined actual provision date and the determined cost for that one determined option, and wherein the presented information indicates that the selected option is the preferred option.

69. (Original) The method of claim 63 including, after the order is placed but before the actual provision date for the determined option used to fulfill the order, presenting information about the actual fulfilling of the order that has occurred.

70. (Original) The method of claim 69 wherein the information about the actual fulfilling of the order is presented to the user.

71. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 63 wherein the presented information to the user further includes the determined costs for each of the multiple determined options and includes one or more presented controls that are selectable by the user to specify choices related to how one of the determined options will be used to fulfill the order.

72. (Original) The method of claim 63 including indicating to use one of the determined options to fulfill the order.

73. (Original) The method of claim 63 wherein the presented information for at least some of the determined options includes an indication of an actual effect that will result from using that determined option to fulfill the order.

74. (Original) The method of claim 63 wherein the provision date determined for the determined options is a date on which the order is delivered to the recipient when using that determined option to fulfill the order.

75-76. (Canceled)

77. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium containing a data structure for use in providing to a user actual fulfillment information for each of multiple distinct fulfillment plans that are options for fulfilling an order, each fulfillment plan associated with one or more distribution centers from which items of the order are to be transported to a recipient, the one or more distribution centers for each fulfillment plan being selected from multiple alternative distribution centers that each are available to supply items to recipients, the data structure comprising a multiplicity of entries each representing one of the multiple fulfillment plans, each entry comprising:

an indication of the fulfillment plan; and

an indication of actual fulfillment information that reflects the fulfilling of the order if the indicated fulfillment plan is used, the actual fulfillment information for the indicated fulfillment plan including a determined actual delivery date if the indicated fulfillment plan is used to fulfill the order and a determined cost of using the indicated fulfillment plan to fulfill the order, at least one of the determined actual delivery date and the determined cost being based at least in part on processing that would take place at the one or more associated distribution centers for the indicated fulfillment plan to prepare the order to be transported from those one or more associated distribution centers.

78. (Canceled)

79. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 77 wherein the determined actual delivery date for each represented fulfillment plan includes an actual delivery time for the order.

80. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 77 wherein the determined cost for each represented fulfillment plan reflects a cost to the user of using the fulfillment plan.

81. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 77 wherein each entry of the data structure further comprises an indication of the one or more distribution centers associated with the fulfillment plan represented by the entry, an indication of a manner of transporting the order to a recipient, an indication of one or more processing lanes to be used at each of the indicated distribution centers, an indication of a manner of acquiring at least some items of the order, and/or an indication of a manner of processing at least some of the items at the indicated distribution centers.

82. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 77 wherein each entry of the data structure further comprises an indication of a manner of presenting the actual fulfillment information.

83. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 77 wherein each entry of the data structure further comprises an indication of at least one user-selectable control to be displayed to the user.

84. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 77 wherein the data structure is at least part of a Web page to be displayed to the user.

85. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 77 wherein the data structure is stored as a multi-dimensional array.

86. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 77 wherein the computer-readable medium is a data transmission medium transmitting a generated data signal containing the data structure.

87. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 77 wherein the computer-readable medium is one or more computer memories that collectively contain the data structure.